

Safe Sanctuaries®

• Policies and Procedures for the
Prevention of Abuse

Scripture

Matthew 18:5-6

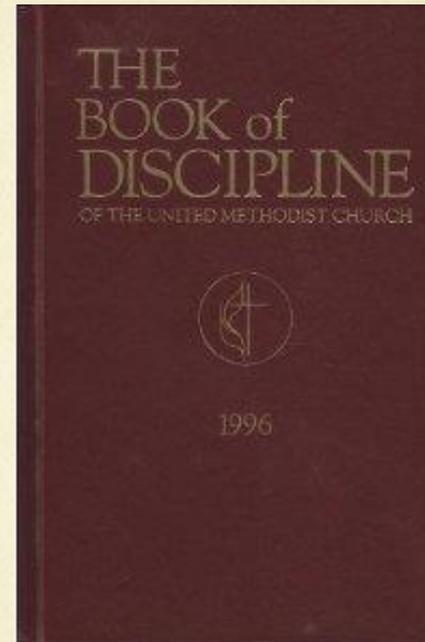
“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Luke 18:15-17

People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

History of Safe Sanctuaries®

- 1996 General Conference
- Resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church
- UMC Social Principles (¶162c) “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse”



Why do all churches need a policy?

All churches have children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults and could be at risk because . . .

- We are very trusting
- We provide opportunities for close contact and relationships
- We host weddings and funerals

Who are children, youth, and at-risk and vulnerable adults?

- **Children** are all persons from infants through the fifth or sixth grade, as determined by each local church in order to conform with grade-level practices of its local area schools.
- **Youth** are all persons in the sixth-grade or seventh-grade through the twelfth-grade, as determined by each local church in order to conform with grade-level practices of its local area schools.

Who are children, youth, and at-risk and vulnerable adults?

- At-risk and vulnerable adults are:
 - Those who are mentally and/or physically disabled
 - Those adults who volunteer under the assumption that the church is protecting them - Sunday school teacher, volunteers and staff.

Does abuse really happen in the church?

- Yes, abuse really **does** happen in the church. Abuse happens in churches of all sizes and in all areas.
- We can help prevent most of the abuse that happens in a church with a set of procedures which we faithfully follow.
- We will not eliminate 100% of abuse, but by having procedures in place within a local congregation, predators will be deterred.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical** abuse occurs where a person intentionally causes bodily harm to a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult.
- **Sexual** abuse occurs where an adult or another older or more powerful youth has sexual contact with a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult.

Types of Abuse

- **Emotional** abuse occurs where a person speaks violently, cruelly, or otherwise exposes a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult to violence or emotional cruelty.
- **Neglect** is abuse which occurs where a person endangers the health, safety, or welfare of a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult by failing to act in a reasonable manner.

Who are Abusers?

- Usually someone familiar to and trusted by the victim or family
- In $\frac{3}{4}$ of all reported incidents the victim is related to or acquainted with the abuser
- Approximately 30% of abusers were abused as children

Who are the victims?

- The child/youth/at-risk or vulnerable adult
- The child's family
- The congregation
- The family of the abuser
- Peers of the child

The Child or Victim Is...

- Never responsible for causing the abuse
- Never to be blamed for the abuse
- Never capable of consent to abusive behavior

No congregation can afford,
either financially, ethically, or morally,
to fail to implement strategies
for the prevention of abuse.

The Facts

- The Children's Bureau of Child Maltreatment (US Department of Health and Human Service) reports that in 2012 over 3.4 million children (under 18) were reported as being abused.
- Approximately 6 per minute
- That number has increased each year since 2009.
- 4 children die daily in the U.S. related to child maltreatment.

How to report abuse

- Document, document, document
- Consult with Pastor or a member of the staff
- Call 911 (for imminent situations)
- In Florida contact the Department of Children and Families or call the abuse hotline **1-800-96-ABUSE**
- In Alabama contact the Department of Human Resources



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Existing Policy

- Churches with existing policies created following the previous conference standards do not need to create a new policy.
- Continue to follow the policy and provide training.

Two Adult Rule

The “Two Adult Rule”

is a core principle regarding the supervision required
for covered activities and overnight events.

(Report 8, page 433, paragraph II.C.1

Background Checks

- Valid for 5 years
- Required for all adult volunteers and workers (full and part-time)
- A copy of a current certified state or federal background check is acceptable



Age Requirements

- Authority figures are at least **21** years of age
- Adults are at least 18 years of age in FL or 19 in AL
- Assistants to an authority figure should be no less than **12** years old

Other Minimum Requirements

- Windows in all doors or open-door policy for all classrooms/offices
- Two adults may be related if there is a “floater”
- Keep age appropriate adult/child ratios



Overnight and Transportation

- Overnight events are “covered activities”
- In overnight situations adults sharing a room
 - must be the same gender
 - will not share a bed unless a member of the immediate family
- When sharing an area designate identifiable gender-specific spaces
- At least **2 adult** authority figures should be present when working with or transporting children, youth, and vulnerable adults

Recruitment and Training

- Demonstrate an active relationship in the local church for a minimum of 3 months prior to serving as an authority figure
- Training on what is abuse and how to report abuse
- Check references for both volunteers and new hire employees
- All volunteers and staff should receive training and sign the Safe Sanctuaries Participation Covenant

Recruitment and Training

- Detailed plans for recruiting and screening volunteers/staff
- Procedures to ensure that the physical setting is safe and deterrent to potential abusers

Understanding Personal Space

- Always ask permission to give a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult a hug
- When giving hugs, adults should give a “side hug” to allow space and respect



Guidelines for Social Media

- Discern what the purpose of the social media is for you
- Think before you post or tweet something – it is a public forum
- Remember that you represent Christ and your local congregation
- Remember that anything your post can be forwarded and saved

Guidelines for Social Media

- Exercise caution with commentary
- Do not discuss ministry area concerns, coworkers or publically criticize the UMC
- Be careful who you “friend” – observing appropriate boundaries with congregants
- Do no initiate “friending” with minors
- Check your privacy settings to allow only who you want to view your content online

Safe Sanctuaries Committee

- Develops the policy
- Communicates with and educates the congregation
- Recruits, screens, and trains paid staff and volunteers
- Conducts site inspections
- Retains records
- Regularly reviews conference policies and procedures

Adopting Safe Sanctuaries® Policies and Procedures

- Several options are available to local congregations for adopting policies and procedures
 - Adopt the [Annual Conference](#) policies and procedures and begin to follow them
 - Adjust the policies and procedures from other churches or the Annual Conference adding to make the policies work for your congregation
 - Check for already approved policies is the conference website and the [General Board of Discipleship](#) [GBOD] website
 - Talk with other churches in your area about their policies

Adopting Safe Sanctuaries® Policies and Procedures

- Administrative Council adopts the policy
- Implementing the policy is the responsibility of the Pastor, the governing body, and a permanent Safe Sanctuaries Committee

Safe Sanctuaries Committee Membership

- Chairperson
- Pastor
- Governing Body chairperson
- Lay Delegate to AWF Annual Conference
- Lay Leader
- SPRC chairperson
- Board of Trustees chairperson
- May include other positions